

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose of the Consolidated Housing and Community Development Plan

The 2005-2009 Clark County/City of Vancouver Consolidated Housing and Community Development Plan (H&CD Plan) is prepared by the Clark County CDBG Program and the Clark County/City of Vancouver HOME Consortium, representing Clark County, the incorporated cities of Battle Ground, Camas, La Center, Ridgefield, Vancouver, Washougal, and Woodland, the town of Yacolt, and the unincorporated areas of Clark County.

The 1990 National Affordable Housing Act requires that an H&CD Plan be prepared by each jurisdiction directly receiving assistance from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The Plan addresses the allocation of four federal entitlement programs: Community Development Block Grant (CDBG); HOME Investment Partnership (HOME); Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG); and Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA). The H&CD Plan consolidates the local applications and reporting processes for these federal entitlement programs. It is also a strategic plan that outlines specific courses of action.

The purpose of the H&CD Plan is to:

- Provide an assessment of housing and community development needs in Clark County;
- Develop strategies and goals to ensure affordable housing and decent living environments for persons who earn 80 percent or less of the area median income (AMI), including homeowners and renters, the elderly, the homeless, and persons with special housing needs;
- Develop strategies and goals to ensure support for programs and facilities that promote viable communities and address community development, infrastructure, and human service needs of urban and rural areas; and
- Report proposed use of HUD entitlement funds.

The Clark County/City of Vancouver H&CD draws from a wide range of sources and integrates a variety of planning processes. This plan reflects involvement and input from citizens, service agencies, cities, county departments and housing providers. Intended to be more than just a reporting document, the plan builds on local assets and coordinates a response to the needs of the community. The plan attempts to detail local economic, physical, community and human development needs in a comprehensive manner. It also sets forth goals, objectives, and performance indicators for measuring progress and establishes a framework for assessing new knowledge and experience.

Community Development Needs: an Overview

Community development needs, identified in city/county capital improvements plans, are largely a result of rapid population growth (32 percent over the last ten years) and its impact on the community.

Key Findings

- Infrastructure improvements: Housing, roadways, water and sewer improvements, and the need for recreation; and
- Social Service improvements: Community-based social centers, family resource centers, health facilities, and multi-agency centers.

2005-2009 Clark County Community Development Objectives

- Support improvements to facilities owned and or operated by nonprofits, including acquisition, rehabilitation, and accessibility improvements that provide services to low income, elderly and special needs persons;
- Revitalize and enhance low-income neighborhoods and communities by improving their physical and social character including infrastructure, streets, and sidewalk improvements, parks and other community improvements; and
- Support economic development by providing opportunities for low income, unemployed and disadvantaged people through the promotion of a diverse economic base of family wage jobs.

Affordable Housing Needs: an Overview

The lack of affordable housing for persons earning less than 60 percent of AMI has become a significant problem in recent years. Rapid growth and a strong housing market, while beneficial in many ways, have resulted in housing and rental prices that are unattainable for many.

In Clark County, many agencies provide services for people needing affordable housing and have come together as a community to develop the H&CD plan and other plans with the goal of providing affordable housing.

Key Findings

- The greatest need for housing assistance is for households earning less than 50 percent of AMI;
- According to the 2000 census, 19 percent of the County's low income households earn less than 50 percent of AMI;
- According to the 2000 census, 19 percent of rental households pay more than 50 percent of their income for housing;
- Whether renting or owning a household is at risk of homelessness if it earns below 30 percent of AMI and pays more than 50 percent of their income toward housing costs; and
- Median sale prices for existing homes have risen from \$110,000 in 1994 to \$172,900 over the last ten years. Because of low interest these homes can be affordable to households earning 71 percent or more of AMI, households under this threshold have little chance of purchasing a home without some type of assistance.

2005-2009 Clark County/Vancouver Affordable Housing Objectives

- Increase the supply of housing affordable to renter households, earning 60 percent or less of AMI. Insofar as possible, projects should serve households within a range of incomes below 60 percent of AMI and provide a range of unit sizes;
- Promote homeownership opportunities for low- and moderate-income households, including persons with disabilities and first-time homebuyers earning less than 80 percent of AMI;
- Create additional housing options and opportunities for self-sufficiency for low-income elderly persons, persons with disabilities and special needs;
- When cost effective, preserve existing affordable housing units threatened with loss due to condition, location, expiring federal contracts, redevelopment efforts, or other situations. Includes reduction/elimination of lead-based paint hazards;
- Maintain and support the capacity of local non-profit housing organizations; and
- Plan for and support fair housing strategies and initiatives to promote fair housing and increase access to housing and housing programs.

Homeless Needs: an Overview

An increasing number of homeless families have at least one wage earner, but are unable to locate or retain permanent affordable housing due to a low income that is not sufficient to pay the cost of housing, food, utilities, childcare, health care and transportation.

Key Findings

- In March 2005 the Council for the Homeless coordinated a one-day street count of Clark County homeless. This survey documented 1,578 homeless individuals, both sheltered and unsheltered, an increase of 147 individuals from 2004;
- There are nine homeless shelters in Clark County with a total of 318 beds. In 2004, it was estimated that 7,896 individuals (2,819 unique individuals) were turned away from one of the shelter beds due to lack of space, a daily average of 21 turnaways and a significant increase over prior year turnaway statistics; and
- The Clark County Continuum of Care strategy focuses on the long-term importance of permanent supportive housing rather than the short-term crisis intervention of emergency shelter beds. Community service agencies report that 90 percent of homeless families and 75 percent of homeless individuals could make an immediate move into any supported housing if such housing were available.

2005-2009 Clark County/Vancouver Homeless Objectives

- Maintain and enhance services and facilities that serve the needs of homeless individuals and families;
- Secure stable sources of operating funding for existing services and facilities; and
- Support agencies that provide services for people who are currently homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.